

18/6

TYTHER, James
A

R E V I E W

O F

Mr AITKEN'S
Outlines of the Theory and Cure
Of FEVER,

On plain and rational Principles.

W I T H

A POETICAL ADDRESS TO
N O N S E N S E.

Thick darkness overshadows all his bounds;
PALPABLE darkness. MILTON.

Sold at the Infirmary at Twelve,
At the College-gate at One o'clock afternoon,
And no where else.

[Price Sixpence.]

Lytle, J.

TO NONSENSE.

TREMENDOUS Pow'r ! before whose awful shrine
The starveling Poets bow, in hopes to dine ;
Before whose throne ten thousand Authors stand,
And anxious wait their sov'reign's dread command ;
Assist me, NONSENSE ! bend thy callous ear ;
If thou canst hear an humble stranger's pray'r.
Teach me to sing thy dear, thy darling son,
Th' IMMORTAL DOCTOR, with his PATENT-GUN.
On him direct thy fable Godhead show'rs,
In native darkness, all thy PLASTIC POW'RS.
Thy PLASTIC PROCESS form'd his dark OUTLINES,
Where Nonsense cloth'd in dusky splendor shines ;
Where scatter'd wide, by thy absurd command,
In dire *derangement* his Ideas stand ;
By thee inspir'd his muddy strains he pours,
And blund'ring on, thro' thick, thro' thin, he scours ;
No ray of light his wooden soul pervades,
Nor airy Fancy paints her various shades ;
No learning, judgement, common sense, is found,
But all is darkness in the vast profound.
Lo ! at his feet expiring GRAMMAR lies,
While mangled LANGUAGE in convulsions dies :

See, words on words in mad confusion hurld,
 He cries, are the'ries to reform the world !
 With antique diction see strange whims combin'd,
 In jumbling jargon uncouth phrases join'd ;
 New words are coin'd, the sense of others chang'd,
Enormous symptoms of a brain *derang'd*.
 To Sense IMPALPABLE, to Reason lost,
 By jarring Nonsense thro' wild Chaos tost,
 Lo ! how he labours, plunges, and confounds,
 Lo ! how bewilder'd in his muddy mounds.
 As when a puddle, swell'd by sudden rains,
 O'erflows with filth, and deluges the plains,
 Obscur'd by mud is nature's lovely green,
 Nor pleasant herb, nor fragrant flow'r is seen,
 Dead cats, *et cet'ra*, round lie thick bestrown,
 And dirt on all sides by the stream is thrown ;
 The hapless passenger is mir'd, and sinks,
 While round the torrent rages, roars, and stinks ;
 Thus o'er fair Science BOMBARDINIAN glides,
 Obscures and sullies with his blund'ring tides,
 And with philanthropy the quack's pretence,
 His four-pence pamphlet swells to eighteen-pence.
 From place to place th' empiric hero flies,
 And his own praises trumpets to the skies.

“ Think not to fright me with a mighty name ;
 “ With sage Hippocrates, or Syd’nham’s fame ;
 “ I all Physicians, nay all quacks excell,
 “ My future greatness, lo ! what signs foretell.
 “ My pow’rful breath shall Error’s triumph blast,
 “ My laurels flourish, and my fame shall last.
 “ Some may indeed correct a slight mistake,
 “ Or the foundations of a system shake ;
 “ But I, in med’cine blest with matchless skill,
 “ Like great Drawcanfir, all on both sides kill ;
 “ I tread them down, their vital flame I quench,
 “ Erroneous Systems raze, both root and branch.
 “ O, had kind nature made me but a God !
 “ I’d shun the path the world’s Creator trod,
 “ From off the stage this tyrant Death I’d drive,
 “ And men and beasts alike preserve alive ;
 “ Celestial health should spread from pole to pole,
 “ And life unbounded gladden every soul.
 “ No sigh, no murmur, the wide world should hear,
 “ From ev’ry eye, I’d wipe off ev’ry tear ;
 “ I’d fill my pockets, and my patients fleece,
 “ And cure the world for FIFTY POUNDS apiece.”

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A R E V I E W, &c.

AN apology for troubling the public with animadversions on such a contemptible performance as Mr Aitken hath issued, would have been indispensibly necessary, had it not, by being made the subject of conversation in the Medical Society, attained a degree of importance, to which, by its own merits it could not pretend. In what manner the Society were induced to admit that pamphlet as a subject of debate, is not my business to inquire; but I feel for them, as having thus run the risk of rendering themselves despicable in the eyes of every sober and rational person. I am the more concerned on this account, as a gentleman, from our sister kingdom, eminent in his profession, happened to be present at one of those debates; and, did I imagine that the author of the pamphlet was capable of the feelings of other men, I should be sorry for him on the same account.

If any thing farther is necessary to be added by way of preface, it is, that the ENORMITY of the author's vanity requires a severe reprehension ; as it hath prompted him to boast of having obtained a complete victory with regard to his performance, which either was not attacked, or, as far as the overbearing manner of its author would allow a fair debate, was completely answered.

In animadverting upon this performance, I find myself at a loss, not for want of matter for criticism, but from having too much of it. Every sentence indeed is such a piece of complete nonsense, that it would be sufficient to sink the credit of any other performance whatever ; what then are we to think of a work composed of nothing else besides sentences of that kind ? To expose the absurdity of it in every part, would far exceed the limits I have prescribed to myself ; I

shall therefore only point out some of the most remarkable passages, where his words, instead of conveying any instruction, seem to have been put down for no other purpose than to fill up the book, and consequently might have been superseded by words or letters wrote down at random.

In the first paragraph, our author tells us, that Organization is “the natural arrangement of ultimate component parts into fibrous or vascular structure, animal or vegetable.” The use of definitions, among ordinary writers, at least, is to explain one thing which is obscure, by another which is more evident, and better known; but here, the obscurity pervades the whole. Every body knows, that matter hath ultimate component parts; but we cannot know any thing about their arrangement, except what is learned from their appearance to our senses in the various modifications of natural sub-

stances ; which, in the present instance, is the fibrous and vascular structure of animals or vegetables. The definition therefore amounts to nothing more than this, that organization is the fibrous and vascular structure of animals or vegetables; or, in other words, that organization is an animal or vegetable body.

In a perfect conformity to such an exordium, are we led through the whole book. The next paragraph acquaints us, that animal and vegetable bodies derive their respective powers and special qualities from organization, i. e. from themselves, according to the above definition; and, to add to the stupidity of the sentence, we are told, that this organization is “ineffably peculiar and delicate;” by which means we are effectually prevented from making any inquiry into the sources of animal and vegetable powers, if we should have any inclination to

do so.---The third paragraph informs us, that an animal body is possessed of “animation,” and the fourth, that health consists in perfect “animated organization ;” and thus by proper substitution of the definition of organization, instead of the word “organization” itself, we are acquainted that health consists in a perfect “animated animal.”

In this extraordinary manner, doth our author proceed through the whole of his performance; which, in truth, resembles more the ravings of a person in Bedlam, than a treatise written by a public Lecturer, and Fellow of so many “Royal” Societies as the title page designs him. In short, if the Introduction to this extraordinary work, consisting of six pages, or 15 paragraphs, is put into plain English, it will amount to the following positions. “Organization is animal, or vegetable structure. Animals and vegetables derive their powers from their own structure ; and

what this structure is we cannot tell.-- An animal body is possessed of "animation." Health is health, and disease is disease. Disease is either local or general; the former is "palpable" the latter "impalpable;" but though local diseases are themselves palpable, the matter producing them is wholly "impalpable;" for which reason it is named "morbific matter," or "deranging" cause or power. Predisponent causes predispose, and occasional causes occasion. Proximate morbid cause is not a morbid cause, but a disease.-- Nature cures diseases by a "plastic power," this Plastic power operates by a "plastic process;" and this plastic power and process are the only means of curing diseases "directly;" notwithstanding which, the remedies employed by Physicians are curative means!" If any man in the world can bring forth more sense or reason from this introduction, I am content to bear what-

ever Censure the author may chuse to inflict.

After such an hopeful Introduction, we are apt to conclude beforehand what Instruction is to be derived from the rest of the work, and our author takes care not to disappoint us. We are told, p. 7. that Fever is “Morbid alteration of the healthful degree of vigour; of the circulation of fluids; of secretion; of temperature; of sleep; of Reflection: preceded by shivering, often combined with more or less putridity.”

To this definition let us particularly attend; not on account of its accuracy, but on account of the other parts of his work, where he deviates from it. Fever says he, “is a morbid alteration” &c. But in his language alteration and derangement are synonymous; we shall therefore substitute the one instead of the other, and then we are informed that Fever is a morbid derangement

&c. But the word “morbid” is too general in this place; because it applies to any other disease as well as fever. It must therefore be a specific, or some other kind of derangement peculiar to fever itself; and not a derangement like that of the gout, stone, dropfy, &c. &c. The fever then is a specific, or particular kind of derangement, such as is to be found nowhere but in fever itself; yet, in par. 30. we are told, that “the specific derangement produced by febrile causes, is the proximate cause of fever; i. e. the fever produced by the causes of fever, is the PROXIMATE CAUSE of fever! To the same purpose we are told, par. 38. that “the whole symptoms of fever receive a rational and satisfactory explanation from the proposition, that specific derangement of organization is its proximate cause;” that is, from the proposition, that the fever is the proxi-

mate cause of itself. In this manner are we led in a circle throughout the whole book, without one single coherent, or rational conclusion from beginning to end.

It is painful, however, to dwell on the blunders of an author in mere language. Mr Aitken hath claimed the right of inventing a dialect of his own; and of this right he hath made ample use. Yet, notwithstanding any whimsical peculiarity of this kind, he would be excuseable, if there was a possibility of decyphering his new language in such a manner, as to make any kind of meaning out of it, when put into the words of other mortals. But, by no art have I yet been able to make his book consistent with common sense. In the present instance, his words certainly have no meaning. He hath not defined the outlandish phrase DERANGEMENT, with which we are stunned on all occasions; nor

can it be defined, in the way he has chosen to make use of it. In his 5th paragraph, indeed, he makes it synonymous with any kind of change, or alteration whatever. But when we come to particulars, this will not do. The derangement produced in the fibrous and vascular structure by the causes of one disease, is not the same with that produced by the causes of another: the difference ought therefore to be particularly mentioned; for, to tell us that diseases are owing to "specific derangements" is only telling us in other words, that one disease is not another. Former theorists have particularized the causes of fever; but Mr Aitken will neither allow the causes assigned by others to be just, nor assign any adequate cause himself. If the organization, or the fibrous and vascular structure of the human body, is deranged, or altered, it must be in some particular way. Perhaps some

parts of the vessels may be contracted, so that the fluids cannot circulate freely through them; but this would be SPASM, which is not Mr Aitken's derangement; for he is very angry with those who say that spasm is the cause of fever. Perhaps then the vessels, instead of being contracted, are too much relaxed, so that the fluids are too easily moved by the power of the heart. But this would be DEBILITY, which our author also reprobates. We shall not, however, despair, as long as a supposition can be found. Perhaps the vascular system is not altered in any respect, only there is an increased action of the heart and arteries. But this would be no derangement, but an EXCITEMENT of the nervous power. What shall we say next? If the vessels are neither contracted, nor enlarged, neither strengthened, nor weakened, what change is it which is wrought upon them?

There occurs to me only one other supposition as possible; namely, that they are huddled together in a mass of confusion; and indeed, in whatever way we view Mr Aitken's treatise, we must acknowledge, that it contains as complete a system of **CONFUSION**, as perhaps ever existed.

Thus much with regard to the accuracy of Mr Aitken's definitions, and the instruction to be derived from them. We must next consider what is to be learned from what he hath delivered concerning the indications of cure. Here, however, we shall only meet with the same kind of language applied to a different subject. We have been told already, par. 14. that nature cures diseases by a plastic power, and that this plastic power operates by a plastic process. Mr Aitken therefore wisely observes, that one of the indications of cure in fever is to promote the plastic, or healing pro-

cess; i. e. one of the indications of cure is to promote the cure! Another of his indications is the alleviation of ENORMOUS symptoms. But, in what manner are we to alleviate the enormity of these symptoms, since the plastic power of nature hath taken the plastic process entirely into its own hands, so that the poor doctor has nothing to do but to look on, and receive his fee? Well, indeed, may our author cry out, (par. 68.) "Happy, thrice happy, the sick, to whom heaven sends practitioners duly possessing this quality!" What quality? Is it that of taking the fee for nothing, or that of alleviating enormous symptoms? If it is the latter, who hath ever heard, since the days of Aristotle, of symptoms, or any thing else, alleviated by an occult quality? But, however much our author may deal in the occult sciences himself, he seems to be very angry with those who in-

cline to call in powers of the same kind to their assistance. Almost all physicians have asserted the existence of a certain unknown power, which they called the *vis medicatrix naturae*, and to which they ascribed many wonderful effects. But when the operations of this power come to be explained, all that can be said, is, that nature cures diseases by a “medicinal power.” Against this unfortunate power Mr Aitken hath declared the most violent and furious war. He tells us, that it is an imaginary semi-rational power, and to believe in it is an hurtful delusion. But, if the powers ascribed to nature by Mr Aitken, are not “medicinal”, in what manner do they cure diseases? I hope, he doth not mean to insinuate that nature removes diseases by a pernicious, or poisonous power. As to the other properties of his powers, I have nothing to say; but, sure I am, that his

account of them is not even SEMI-rational.

But, to come at last to the point; let us see in what manner Mr Aitken proposes to assist the plastic power, or plastic process of nature; or, in common language, what is the difference between his practice and that of other physicians. Here he begins with discrediting all attempts to arrest, as he calls it, or extinguish the febrile course. Attempts of this kind, he says, derange organization, and impede the plastic process. In like manner, every remedy which hath been prescribed by other practitioners, is rejected and treated with contempt, not only without reason, but without the least attempt at any thing like reasoning. Emetics are not to be given, because they are both negatively and positively deranging. Sudorifics are destructively deranging, and epispastics produce inflammatory derangement. In

this manner is the whole materia medica discarded at once, and in its place we are allowed to alleviate the enormous symptoms with Ale, Opium, and Glauber's salt, taken separately, it is to be hoped.

When an author proceeds in such a manner as this, he is absolutely below all criticism. Nevertheless, if I may for once reason with Mr Aitken, I will ask him, If aliment is such a wonderful cure for fevers of all kinds, for it seems not to have entered his brain that there was any difference among them, how comes it to pass, that aliment doth not always prevent the accession of fever? That the best aliments are not sufficient for this purpose might be proved by ten thousand instances: at present the following will be sufficient. When Prince Eugene was engaged in a war with the Turks, he had occasion to enter the unwholesome parts of Hungary, the air of

which is very apt to produce fevers of a most malignant nature. A prodigious mortality accordingly ensued among the troops, and it became the principal object of every one's care to preserve himself from the sickness. Among the rest, Prince Eugene was particularly careful of his aliment. Every thing he either eat or drank, was most unexceptionable in its quality. Fresh provisions were sent him every day from Vienna, and even the water which he used, was brought from another country. Yet, notwithstanding all the care he could take, the prince was seized with a dysentery, which, in all probability, would have put an end to his life, had he not in a short time left that unhealthy part of the country.

In the midst of this raging sickness, however, Count Boneval, with all his domestics, enjoyed the most perfect health; infomuch that they became

the admiration, and the envy of all who saw them; and this without being in the least more attentive to their diet than their neighbours. The only precaution used by that nobleman was, to take every day a small quantity of the infusion of Peruvian bark in brandy; and he obliged all his domestics to take the same. By these means he not only preserved himself and family for that season, but lived afterwards to an advanced age in the most unhealthy parts of Hungary, which are known to be as fatal to the human frame, as any country upon earth.

In this case, I ask Mr Aitken, were not the merits of aliment, and of the Peruvian bark, fairly put in competition, and the superiority of the latter as a preventative of fever, clearly evinced? He cannot be ignorant, that the fact I have just now recited, is delivered by practitioners of at least equal credit and character with himself.

What reason then can Mr Aitken assign for his assertion par. 118. that the Peruvian bark, admitting its antiseptic power, its influence on febrile putridity must fall greatly below that of the **GRAND ALIMENTARY ANTI-SEPTICS** mentioned in par. 100? But when we look at this remarkable paragraph, we find the antiseptics there mentioned are, (laugh not, gentle reader) the **TEPID BATH, DILUTION, and OPIUM!**

I have now wearied myself with criticism; for which Mr Aitken's performance affords more abundant matter than any other I ever saw. Even the catalogue of **ERRATA** in this matchless pamphlet is erroneous. An error is marked in the very first line of the first page; but no such error exists in that line, and we are not obliged to find it out any where else. In the second, the correction is as far wrong as the error he hath marked;

and the last is downright nonsense. Errors in diction, in printing, and even in sentiment, are no doubt the constant attendants on all books; and it shews an ill-natured disposition to take advantage of these errors to make the author appear ridiculous: but, in the present instance, Mr Aitken hath certainly been the aggressor; and, by the introduction of his work into the Medical Society, hath discovered a degree of vanity almost unheard of, even among AUTHORS; at the same time that the total want of sentiment, the ridiculous language, and the extreme incorrectness throughout the whole, may justly characterise it as a standard of NONSENSE and BLUNDERING, to all future generations.

